

**Opening Statement**  
**Ranking Member Raúl M. Grijalva**  
**Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources Oversight Hearing:**

*Examining Consequences of America's Growing Dependence on Foreign Minerals*

**December 12, 2017**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The stated topic of this hearing is about the country's dependence on imported minerals.

But I am far more concerned about the unstated topic of this hearing, which is how to make it easier to mine public lands and special places throughout the West.

Republicans on this committee have repeatedly advanced bills to waive environmental reviews and speed up mine permits by designating everything, even sand and gravel, as a strategic and critical mineral.

Thankfully, those have not become law.

But now the Trump Administration has started illegally shrinking national monuments to expose previously protected land to the threat of mining claims and drill rigs once more.

A few months ago Chairman Bishop asked the Administration to reconsider other areas that the Obama Administration had protected from mining.

This includes areas around the Grand Canyon, which are currently off-limits to new mining claims for the next fifteen years.

That's not enough. The Grand Canyon is one of America's greatest treasures, a quintessential national park and an iconic emblem of the American West. It deserves permanent protection.

The Obama Administration considered the issue for years, held nine public meetings and received nearly three hundred thousand (300,000) comments, and concluded that the Grand Canyon Watershed deserved protection from unchecked uranium development.

But recently the Trump Forest Service released a report developed in secret over a handful of months with zero public input, recommending reopening the Grand Canyon watershed to new mining claims.

This would be shocking if it wasn't so predictable.

When President Trump looks at the American landscape, he doesn't see stunning vistas, fragile wilderness, or a heritage that we owe it to future generations to protect.

For him and Secretary Zinke, the only value of our public lands is how much money we can dig or drill out of them.

But these landscapes and these treasures are not just numbers to be entered on a corporate balance sheet.

They are the ancestral and sacred home of the Havasupai, the Hopi, the Hualapai, the Navajo, and other tribes.

They are the source of water that tens of millions of people depend on for drinking and farming.

They are the economic engine that draws millions of people to Northern Arizona to hunt, fish, camp, bike, or simply gaze in awe at one of the greatest natural wonders of the world.

They are not there to be ruthlessly exploited by a cabal of foreign mine owners and large campaign donors.

My bill to establish the Greater Grand Canyon Heritage National Monument would permanently protect this region, and Chairman Bishop should stop ignoring my requests for a hearing on it.

We also should be talking about the fact that mining in this country is too easy, not too hard.

We still operate under 19<sup>th</sup>-Century laws designed to encourage miners to take over federal lands.

Mining companies have free access to nearly all of our public lands. They pay no royalties. And land managers have their hands tied when it comes to trying to protect vulnerable landscapes, wildlife habitat, waterways, and more.

The current system is bad for the taxpayers, it's bad for the environment, and it's bad for mining companies, because operating under a 150-year-old law that doesn't reflect modern times simply generates more lawsuits and more local opposition to mining proposals.

Tinkering around the edges won't solve this problem. Comprehensive mining reform that protects our most precious lands, such as the Grand Canyon, is what we need. And I will be introducing legislation along these lines in the near future.

I thank the witnesses for being here, particularly Councilwoman Tilousi of the Havasupai, and I yield back the balance of my time.